



Carnegie Shul Chatter

August 8, 2019



The Greatest Contribution

There is one thing in Deuteronomy that I would like to comment upon. The very last paragraph of the article from myjewishlearning.com, *Deuteronomy's effect on Jewish life cannot be overstated. No idea has shaped Jewish history more than monotheism, which this book asserts so passionately.*

Of all the many contributions that Judaism has made to the history of mankind, to me none can compare to the concept of monotheism. As it says in the Shema, "Hear, oh Israel, the Lord is thy God, the Lord is one."

One God, not multiple Gods, as had the Greeks and Romans. Not idols. But the One true God. It is the most important aspect of our faith. How lucky we are that the one true God revealed himself to us and gave us his Torah.

The Final Book

This week we begin the reading of Deuteronomy, the fifth and final book of The Five Books of Moses.

Below is an article that discusses Deuteronomy from myjewishlearning.com that was excerpted from Etz Hayim: Torah and Commentary.

**Hear, O Israel:
The Lord our
God is one Lord**

Deuteronomy 6:4

The Book of Deuteronomy

The biblical book whose law and theology most directly shaped later Judaism.

By Dr. Jeffrey Tigay

The Names of Deuteronomy



Deuteronomy, the fifth and final book of the Torah, has two Hebrew names: Sefer Devarim, short for (Sefer) ve'eleh hadevarim, “(The Book of) ‘These are the words,’” taken from its opening phrase; and Mishneh Torah, “Repetition of the Torah” (source of English “Deuteronomy”), taken from Deuteronomy 17:18. It consists of five retrospective discourses and poems that Moses addressed to Israel in Moab shortly before his death (Deuteronomy 1:6 4:43, 4:44 28:69, 29 30, 32, 33), plus two narratives about his final acts (Deuteronomy 31, 34). The book’s core is the second discourse, in which Moses conveys laws that the people commissioned him to receive from God at Mount Sinai 40 years earlier.

Exclusive Loyalty to God

Several themes in Deuteronomy stand out. Among the Torah’s books, it is the most vigorous and clear advocate of monotheism and of the ardent, exclusive loyalty that Israel owes God (Deuteronomy 4:32 40, 6:4 5). It emphasizes God’s love, justice, and transcendence.

This book stresses the covenant between God and Israel, summed up in Deuteronomy 26:16 19. Established with the patriarchs, affirmed at Sinai and in Moab, it is to be reaffirmed as soon as Israel enters its land (Deuteronomy 4:31, 5:2, 28:69, 27).

Life in the Land of Israel

Deuteronomy looks toward Israel’s life in the land of Israel, where a society pursuing justice and righteousness, living in harmony with God and enjoying His bounty, can be established (Deuteronomy 4:5 8, 7:12 13). The promise of this land is conditional (Deuteronomy 11:8 9, 21); Israel’s welfare depends on maintaining a society governed by God’s social and religious laws. These laws are a divine gift to Israel, unparalleled in their justice and their ability to secure God’s closeness (Deuteronomy 4:5 8). The Torah’s humanitarianism is most developed in Deuteronomy’s concern for the welfare of the poor and disadvantaged.



Centralized Worship

Deuteronomy proclaims the unique rule that sacrifice may take place only in the religious capital, in a single sanctuary (Deuteronomy 12). Its aim is to spiritualize religion by freeing it from excessive dependence on sacrifice and priesthood. It urges instead studying God’s law and performing rituals that teach reverent love for Him. These teachings probably laid the groundwork for nonsacrificial, synagogue-based worship.

Deuteronomy's Appeal to Wisdom

Deuteronomy has a strong intellectual orientation. It urges all Israelites to study God's laws. Its style is didactic and sermonic, explaining the meaning of events and the purpose of laws, to secure Israel's willing, understanding assent.



Deuteronomy and Judaism



Deuteronomy strongly influenced later Jewish tradition. The core of Jewish worship is the recitation of the Shema (6:4) and the public reading of the Torah (rooted in 31: 11). Also based on Deuteronomy are the duty of blessing God after meals (Birkat Hamazon, Deuteronomy 8:10), [a prayer of sanctification] on (Deuteronomy 5:12), affixing mezuzahs (also known as mezuzot) to doorposts, wearing (phylacteries) (Deuteronomy 6:8 9, 11:18, 20) and (fringes) (Deuteronomy 22:12), and charity to the poor (e.g., Deuteronomy 15:8).

Deuteronomy is the source of the concept that religious life should be based on a sacred book and its study. As the biblical book that deals most explicitly with beliefs and attitudes, it plays a major role in Jewish theology. In the theological ethical introduction of his digest of Jewish law, the Mishneh Torah, Maimonides cites Deuteronomy more than any other book, starting with the command to believe in God and Him alone.

Deuteronomy's effect on Jewish life cannot be overstated. No idea has shaped Jewish history more than monotheism, which this book asserts so passionately.

Yahrzeit Plaques

Commemorate a loved one by dedicating a yahrzeit plaque in his or her memory at the Carnegie Shul. These beautiful plaques, mounted on the sanctuary walls, are lit on the loved one's yahrzeit, Yom Kippur, and days when Yizkor is recited. The names are also read aloud from the Bimah during services on the Sabbath of the yahrzeit and on Yom Kippur. To purchase a plaque, for only \$175, please email Mike Roteman at mrmike7777@yahoo.com.



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Please consider sponsoring a Kiddush in honor or in memory of a loved one, for only \$36. Your sponsorship will be announced from the bimah and in the weekly Chatter. To sponsor a Kiddush, email mrmike7777@yahoo.com.